

# GUIDE

*Official Publication of  
Paulist Institute for Religious Research*

## MISSION OPPORTUNITY IN A DECLINING PARISH

David L. McManus

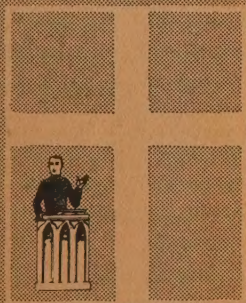
## CATHOLIC ECUMENISM

Bernard Leeming, S.J.

## OUR PUBLIC IMAGE

Martin H. Work

FEBRUARY 1961, No. 15



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IT SEEMS TO ME

## The Social Apostolate

Parishes noted for active efforts to attract individual inquirers should be equally distinguished for their engagement in the social apostolate. Other reasons aside, every move on the part of American Catholics to Christianize the institutions of our society will help to create an ever more widespread climate of sympathetic interest in Catholicism.

Viewed from the aspects of potential converts, our fellow citizens represent three attitudes toward the Church. At one extreme is a small minority who are to some degree drawn toward Catholicism. At the other extreme is another minority who are more or less hostile to the Church.

Between these two segments of our nation, there lies a towering majority of our countrymen who seldom give the Church a single thought. They pass our churches incuriously, almost never read our literature and feel no strong incentive to take a long look at Catholicism. Even when, on rare occasions, they give the Church more than a passing glance, their vision of her is more or less blurred by the mists of distortion, prejudice or misinformation.

It is to the credit of many parishes that they publicize and conduct competently a series of inquiry classes to capitalize on the good dispositions of non-Catholics who are in some measure favorably disposed to the Church. But what are we doing to catch the favorable attention of those vast millions whose communal attitude remains one of indifference?

These people are not ordinarily disposed to discuss the nature of the Church or our specifically Catholic doctrines. But they are beset with innumerable social problems: local, national and international. And it is the privilege of the layman to shed the light of Catholic principles upon these problems. Exercising the kind of apostolate described by Martin Work in this issue of *Guide* will not increase our converts over night. But it will create that climate of sympathetic interest in the Church without which interested inquirers will remain depressingly small.

JOHN T. MCGINN, C.S.P.

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GUIDE, No. 155, FEBRUARY, 1961

Published 10 times a year (monthly except June-July, August-September when bi-monthly) by The Missionary Society of St. Paul the Apostle in the State of New York, 411 West 59th Street, New York 19, N. Y. Second class postage paid at New York, N. Y. Rates 1 year, \$1.00; 10¢ a copy; 5¢ a copy in bulk to Seminarians.

# Mission Opportunity in a Declining Parish

By David L. McManus

About fifteen years ago a Baltimore area was faced with what is now a familiar phenomenon—the dying parish. In 1953, Father Joseph P. Josaitis went to a parish that had dwindled to one-tenth its size, consisting of three hundred members or, rather, three hundred church-goers. The school had closed, the nuns left, and there was no Holy Name Society, Sodality or CYO.

The rate of decline in this parish, St. Gregory the Great, was unnaturally rapid, so much so that the pastor felt he had (when he looked at it from an outside observer's point of view) a dead parish.

Founded in 1884, the parish had grown into a large middle class complex of some 3,000 members, boasting a large granite stone church, a large school, a convent and a then imposing and comfortable house for the priests. World War II bled the neighborhood of its youth and those veterans who returned became married and settled in the fast growing suburban communities. The old people eventually died or moved with the young and the neighborhood was replaced by an economically lower class, coming from a different part of the country and of a different color and creed.

The new people were not welcomed by the existing community, and their own creeds made them suspect a religion they did not really know. In all cases, it was a religion enjoyed by those who did not accept them. It was, from the viewpoint of the new group, a white socio-economically higher religious community of comparatively urbane people.

When Father Josaitis arrived he used the "tools" that came most naturally to him—kindness, humor (most necessary) and graciousness. His one aim was to gain the confidence of the new group and, by his action, to un-teach the old.

This he did, but after four years Father

Josaitis saw that this was not enough. He saw that his was not just another city parish that had declined and needed rebuilding according to old methods. He realized he was in the diaspora. Three hundred Catholics in an area of 39,000 non-Catholics obviously made this mission territory.

He therefore put his parish on missionary status and then, because of his years and the enormous task before him, asked for help by way of an assistant.

So much for the pre-history of the new parish. It is pre-history since the aim now is not to reforge the old community out of the old remaining pieces (there were, in fact, few) but to build by missionary principles a new community, resting in actual fact on an older strata yet not relying upon it.

The sociological make-up of the parish can be quickly sketched. There are four distinct areas in St. Gregory the Great parish.

Area A is a housing development of approximately five hundred families. Its ten-year existence and its relatively small turnover give it a fair degree of stability. The community is conscious of itself as a separate and distinct group, albeit with a limited economic range. There is a maximum salary limit imposed on families living in the project; for example, a couple with five children may earn no more than \$4,950. This maximum is pro-rated down according to the number of children.

Area B is the most sociologically stable section of the community. It is comprised of the familiar Baltimore "row" houses (living room, dining room, kitchen, three bedrooms, basement sometimes finished into rooms or a family area), with lawns and hedges. The houses are owner-occupied and the heads of the family are often teachers, school principals, lawyers, real estate agents or something that is "economically similar."

Area C is a slum area. By "slum" we do

Through the courtesy of *Worship*: issue of May, 1960. Mr. McManus is associated with the Helicon Press, Baltimore, Md.



not mean mere poverty but disorganized poverty in which there is no sense of community—a distinction often made by Monsignor John D. Ilich and one that is readily grasped when a comparison is made between our large city “slums” and those almost destitute “communities” in under-developed countries. The row houses in this area (older by some fifteen years) are occupied by several families with little or no owner occupancy. The population is fluid, changing and greatly impoverished. It is this area that is slated for reclamation by the Urban Renewal and Rehabilitation Agency of Baltimore City. It is hoped and planned that within ten years this area will develop into something similar to Area A.

Area D is more difficult to define. Some of the houses here are owner-occupied but divided into apartments with many families per dwelling. It is a mixture of B and C Areas. Consequently, the problems posed in this section are equally mixed.

Among the many social problems facing Father Josaitis and his assistant, Father Joseph M. Connolly, are: an excessive number of liquor outlets in the area, illegitimacy, loan sharks, voting ignorance, housing needs, the urbanization of rural immigrants (no one, incidentally, in official Baltimore knows how many immigrants are here), and all the effects and results of these larger categories. The parish has taken an active part in the Baltimore Urban Renewal Program. This is a long-range commitment on the part of the parishioners, many of whom are now serving on various committees of this program. The whole area of social action, however, is not the aim of this brief report—it will be matter for another day.

## MISSION PRINCIPLES

Our present interest (with the above background in mind) is to discuss the practical steps that Father Josaitis and his assistant have taken to build a new parish using missionary principles. These principles are *independent of racial considerations* and are best expressed by a *total approach* in which the liturgical, the catechetical and the sociological play their part, but not to the exclusion or over-emphasis of any one of them.

During the first years of the program certain achievements have been made in the liturgical and catechetical field. The aim of the pastor has been to build a community

where all the members pray with the Church, become conscious of the need for their active role in the life of the parish, and by instruction and self-study gain a concrete knowledge and a personal appreciation of the richness of their creed.

It should be emphasized that the population surrounding this parish is Protestant or noncommittal. If, say the priests of the parish, St. Gregory's were Protestant, there would be no problem because the Protestant theology of the parish is based on the Protestant theology of the Church which considers the Church as the congregation and the parish as this particular congregation. When the congregation moves, the Church moves.

But St. Gregory the Great is Catholic. The Church is the people of God, the divine instrument calling to herself unredeemed men; the parish is the Church universal present in this geographical area. When the people leave the geographical area and new people move in, the only Catholic answer is to make the people Catholic. Therefore, in the words of the parish priests, since this is St. Gregory's situation, the only solution for St. Gregory's is to be run as a missionary parish.

Today the parish has more than seven hundred active members, ninety per cent of whom are Negro. On Sundays there are two fully-participated community Masses at 9:00 and 12:15. In addition to the pastor's Mass for the people, the 9:00 Mass is offered every Sunday for the conversion of the 39,000 non-Catholics in the parish area.

At the moment, the *Parish Mass Book* published by the World Library of Sacred Music is used and to this are added various psalms appropriate to the season. The parish has formed a core of cantors and lectors who are and have been instrumental in helping other parishes in the city begin similar programs. The gospel and the epistle are read every day at the parish Mass which is preceded by a brief one-minute homily on the liturgy of the day and specific intentions. Recently, a choir has been added to lend solemnity to certain occasions.

The community-participated Mass is usually a low Mass with processional, offertory, communion, and recessional hymns. The commentator makes brief, explanatory statements prepared by the priests before all the essential actions of the Mass.

The sermon on Sunday is part of a care-



## *At St. Gregory's, the entire parish is engaged in an extensive Catechetical program.*

any planned course lasting as long as nine months or as short as three. Each sermon is prefaced by a resumé of what preceded. For instance, a course of sermons (often, but not necessarily, incorporating the liturgy of the day) was devoted to the history, meaning, liturgy and action of the Mass. Or, the sermons may be devoted to the meaning of the Church.

In any event, conscious effort and careful planning assure that the Sunday sermon becomes a real moment of instruction on fundamental subjects.

During Advent, Lent, May, October, etc., evening services are held which are centered about the revealed Word of God. This particular Bible devotion was discussed and described by Father Connolly in the March, 1960 issue of *Worship*.

The pastor constantly stresses the absolute need for prayer—that the entire program depends upon the solid support of prayer. Elaborate mechanical devices, sociological pressure groups, or the use of any human psychological tricks, even though they amass a large number of people (many non-Catholics attend St. Gregory's) will not make those people the people of God if these devices remain purely human, purely psychological.

Aside from the prayer of the priest and congregation a concrete program has been set up to include the "shut-ins" who are asked to pray at special times during the day for the people of the parish. The retired and the elderly are asked to (and do) visit the church daily to pray for, and with, all the members of the parish. Special efforts are made to instruct the daily communicants in the Mystical Body, how they can and should pray for their fellow members and avoid that well-known particularism that can stifle spiritual growth.

Perhaps one of the most important activities of the parish today is its catechetical program. As the pastor said: "The main missionary instrument of the parish is the restoration of the catechumenate. This is accomplished under the direct sponsorship of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine.

The program lasts for one and one-half years. At present, the Killgallon - Weber

Catechism, *Life in Christ*, is used at lessons held once a week for each class of catechumens. (To date, two classes have been baptized and three more are in various stages of advancement.) The teachers are diplomaed graduates of courses given by the Archdiocesan Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. Each member of the catechumen class must attend one of the community Masses every Sunday in order to be instructed by the liturgy in which he will one day fully participate. Each member is formally received into the catechumenate and formal promotion is made every three months.

The entire parish is involved in this catechumenate program. All members are expected to be "Fishers," i.e., to bring in potential candidates. In fact, all present catechumens have been brought into class by parishioners! (Father John O'Brien considers that the greatest obstacle to mass conversions is the prejudice held by the laity that convert-making is solely the priest's job.) Each catechumen has a "Shepherd" as a friend and confidant who is there to help the potential member over whatever rough terrain he may be traveling.

### THE CATECHUMENATE

Because of certain problems arising from marriages that are not valid in the eyes of the Church, there is a class of permanent catechumens who regularly attend community Masses, Bible devotions and other activities in the parish. It is hoped that by co-operating with God's grace at the present, through frequent contact with the full community, an earlier than expected formal acceptance of the Church and her demands will take place.

The goal in the catechumenate program is *large scale conversions*.

As a matter of interest, none of those societies or activities that existed prior to World War II have been revived. Bingo is the only non-liturgical activity in the parish. During the year four one-day pilgrimages are made. The St. Vincent de Paul Society is the only outside organization that elicits interest and support from the parish.

The task of re-instituting old organizations was subject to careful and practical scrutiny (a rather complex question in a quasi-southern city) by the pastor, awaiting the turn of events. It is felt that the present activities are full enough for all members of the parish.

In conclusion, much of the work that is foreseen (especially in the field of social action) has yet to begin. A firm foundation based upon an active participation in the liturgy, a knowledge and familiarity with the Word of God, and a parish-oriented concern and enthusiasm for convert work must, according to the pastor, be the first step. With such community worshiping and working with the Church a program of social action can then be more intelligently and soundly inaugurated.

The approach can be briefly described in the words of the priests as a *total view* in which the sociological, the liturgical, the catechetical are not over-emphasized as units but each given its proper task to perform.

There are many severe problems in a parish such as St. Gregory's—problems that should be frankly discussed on another occasion. The area abounds with many sects that, whether or not we wish to acknowledge the truth, are successful in attracting a large number of members. The members attend their church with an astounding frequency and regularity and go through a

rigorous program before they are accepted within the official body of the congregation.

Some interesting and urgent questions can be posed by a parish such as St. Gregory's. At least three of them come to mind immediately:

(1) As Catholics, are we precluded from using "store fronts"?

(2) What approaches can Catholics make to the "store front" mentality?

(3) How does a parish of the type of St. Gregory make representation to the high authorities of the Church concerning the needs of the people?

Father Josaitis who is soon to celebrate his Silver Jubilee has much to be thankful for and is being thanked warmly by all his parishioners who look upon "Father Joe" as a father in a way quite unique in our day. Just recently, his children showed their real community spirit when they gathered together and for several weeks devoted their evenings and weekends to painting the interior of the church. They then invited all the neighbors to come and see and, hopefully, to worship. Since the painting (bright red and saffron) at least one hundred more people have been in attendance at the community Masses.

The missionary principle has worked and is working. Its results are seen, as Father Josaitis put it, in quality—in living members of the Church of God, and not just churchgoers. ■ ■

# Catholic Ecumenism

By Bernard Leeming, S.J.

1. Catholic Ecumenism has a sincere fraternal affection for our separated brethren. It looks upon them as brethren separated from us, not by their own deliberate choice, much less by ill-will, but separated by circumstances not of their making. "Across all the imperfections of men,"—our own imperfections as well as those of others—Catholic Ecumenism tries to make this fraternal affection evident and felt.

2. Consequently, our separated brethren are not theological adversaries to be refuted,

but friends seeking with us a deeper love of Christ. Even if they do not agree with us as to the way in which Christ is beloved, we still love them because they love Christ, and because Christ loves them and makes them lovable.

3. Consequently, Catholic Ecumenism not only acknowledges but rejoices in all the good possessed by our separated brethren.

Through the courtesy of *Unitas*. The Summer issue of 1960.



undoubted blessing and reality of their baptism into Christ, not into any "denomination," and very many gifts of nature and of grace which God has bestowed upon them. It is a joy to see gifts of God not only in individuals but also in corporate groups.

Let none be surprised at my saying that gifts of God exist in corporate dissident groups. Pope Pius XI said that rocks broken from a gold-bearing seam may be themselves gold-bearing. It is, in fact, through the organized teaching of the Orthodox Churches that individuals come to love the Orthodox "tradition"; and it is through the organized teaching of other dissident bodies that individuals learn to love Christ, to repent of sins, to forgive enemies, to trust in the grace of God, to have hope in Christ amid the temptations, sorrows and afflictions of this world. Many hymns which can move every Christian heart have been preserved by corporate groups, and much doctrine that is true.

4. Catholic Ecumenism especially rejoices that so many have engaged in the efforts to overcome divisions among Christians. We do accept very many of their theological principles which the ecumenical movement has thrown into clearer relief. Instances of these truths are:

(a) Christ founded only one Church, not many Churches.

(b) The existing multiplicity of Churches is contrary to Christ's will.

(c) The unity which Christ willed must be visible and outward as well as invisible and inward.

(d) Divisions among Christians are a hindrance to the acceptance of Christianity by non-Christians.

(e) Non-theological factors to a considerable extent have caused divisions and continue to cause divisions. Every Catholic ecumenist asks himself whether his own imperfection and sinfulness may not impede him in making plain the glory of Christ's unity. Whether his own narrowness and ignorance may not cloud in the minds of others the height and the breadth of the Body of Christ.

5. Catholic Ecumenism realizes the need of patience. Charity is kind, is patient, is long-suffering. The divisions have been existing for some centuries and cannot, save by a miracle of God, be healed quickly. Inherited attitudes, group ideas, historical associations—all these are intertwined with

religion. Only with the patience of Christ can they be overcome, and not only by clever arguments or peevish confutations.

6. Catholic Ecumenism realizes that it is by good feeling as well as by good reasoning that our brethren will be brought back to the unity of Christ. The methods approved again and again by missiologists in dealing with non-Christian peoples and cultures are the methods which apply even more pertinently to dealings with separated Christian brethren. We do not try to convert non-Christians by showing them their errors but by showing how the separated truths they hold ought to develop into the Oneness of truth.

### GOOD FAITH AND GOOD WILL

7. Catholic Ecumenism gives the fullest credit for good faith, good will, honest effort to non-Catholic ecumenists. Catholic ecumenists are well aware that the situation among non-Catholic denominations is not the same as it is among ourselves. Hence, we do not judge proposals for "reunions" among our separated brethren by the sole norm of what we know to be true, admit our ignorance of the actual circumstances in which our non-Catholic brethren are working and give them credit for sincerity in their struggle with the ignorance, the prejudices—both doctrinal and anti-doctrinal—and the sense of independence existing among members of "denominations." Catholic Ecumenism admits that measures which would be inappropriate and even gravely wrong among Catholics may be permissible and appropriate among groups whose Christian beliefs are very vague and ill-defined.

8. If Catholic ecumenists sometimes call attention to ambiguities or what seems to them lack of grasp of fundamental and important principles, they do so in a spirit of helpfulness and a desire to support those ecumenists whose appreciation of their principles is not complete or whose appreciation of them is not shared by others. Catholic Ecumenism desires to help, and it is aware that—to express the matter in terms which ecumenists use—one of the best helps on the human level is the clearness and definiteness of Catholic theology.

Catholic Ecumenism exhorts to wise and to charitable speech. Wisdom must be based upon knowledge, and to obtain exact knowledge generally demands serious study and

sometimes demands long and painful investigation. How vast has been the evil caused by false presentations of doctrines, of situations, even, sometimes, of personalities; how sad the history of the growth of misunderstandings and hostile feelings! Truth can be expressed in different ways. It is most readily accepted when it is expressed with sympathy as well as with knowledge. Sympathy without knowledge is futile; knowledge without sympathy is sterile.

9. Above all, Catholic Ecumenism is convinced to the depths of its being that it is only through humility that reconciliation can come. It is proud of Christ's Church and of the unity which Christ, (and not our efforts), has given and preserved. But Catholic Ecumenism, likewise, never forgets that Christ humbled Himself and appeared in outward form as though He were a mere

man: His divinity was there and could be recognized, in the glory of the Cross as well as in the glory of His "signs" and His Resurrection.

Consequently, Catholic Ecumenism, *first, last, and always* prays. Only in the spirit of humble prayer can we do good for Christ and for His Church. Only God can overcome divisions so deep-seated and so longstanding. But the foolishness of God is wiser than men; the weakness of God is stronger than men, and because of this, and this alone, Catholic Ecumenism is full of hope, enthusiasm, and joyful zeal, and is never downcast by rebuffs, or annoyed by misunderstanding, or impatient because of delay. It relies on God and not on human efforts, though it strives to recoil at no labor, no effort, no humiliation to which God by His grace draws and inspires our weakness and frailty. ■ ■

# Our Public Image

By Martin H. Work

The image of the Church that we are concerned with tonight is not that reflected by the so-called professional bigots, for even if we embodied in a perfect way all the virtues of Christ Himself, we should be helpless to change the distorted picture of the Church that is engraved in the minds of such people. What we are concerned with, however, and gravely so, is the image of the Church as it exists in that vast body of sensible Americans which inherits, consciously or not, the Protestant tradition. Their view of the Catholic Church is vitally important. First, because theirs is, for the most part, an honest misunderstanding; secondly, because their misconceptions point the finger of failure in some measure at the Catholic layman. We Catholics, if we have understood ourselves, have failed to interpret the Church and its principles clearly to the people of the American Community. The image of the Church has not been sharply defined for the secular world. We Catholic laymen are, in some degree, re-

sponsible for the misunderstanding, blurred vision and simple ignorance of our non-Catholic neighbors about the Church's position even in such fundamental issues as the one involved in the "divided loyalties" accusation.

We laymen have failed because it is by the actions of the 20 million adult Catholics of this country that others judge our Church. It is possible that we ourselves have laid the foundation for some of the attacks on the Church this election year by the frequency of our sectarian approach to community problems, by a failure to understand that every sin need not be proscribed as a crime by the state; by our inclination to use pressure group tactics when persuasion and community co-operation might be more effective.

First of all, let's understand that this does not call for a gigantic Madison Avenue pub-

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Mr. Work is executive director of the National Council of Catholic Men. This is a digest of a speech he delivered at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Nov. 28, 1960. A condensation.



lic relations campaign. Primarily, it calls for a mature understanding of the Church's history and its role in contemporary society. It calls for more than a child's knowledge of dogma and doctrine. Without this knowledge we cannot hope to create a valid image of the Church in the minds of our fellow citizens. Secondly, we should sympathetically analyze the obstacles that exist, justified or not, in the minds of non-Catholics about the Church. Thirdly, we must honestly examine our own image so that we can correct those deficiencies of our own lives that help distort the image of the Church. Fourthly, it suggests development of a positive program that will illuminate as far as possible the problems that stand in the way of a true reflection of the Church as Christ's Mystical Body in this 20th Century.

What is the public image of the Church that we are trying to present? It was summed up very graphically by Cardinal Cushing when he spoke to the graduating class of the University of Seattle: "You will no longer think of the Church in terms of buildings, Gothic, Romanesque or modern. You will not think of the Church in terms of persons, whether priests or people, whether good or bad. You will not think of the Church in terms of places, whether in the Old World or the New, whether in so-called Catholic countries or in regions lost to the Faith. You will think of the Church in terms of Christ; when you hear the word Church it will mean for you, Christ. You will accept the Church as Christ teaching the world. You will cooperate with the Church as Christ still at work in the world. You will merge all the purposes which give your life meaning, with the purpose of the Church, with the constant effort of the Church to grow to the full stature of Jesus Christ, to make Christ all in all."

This was a direction given to Catholics but it stands as the kind of image we want others to ultimately have of the Church. There is no place in our public image for the Church to be presented as a Rome-centered worldwide administrative organization receiving a performance rating of excellent by the American Institute of Management. Nor is it the religious counterpart of the Communist political party bent on world-wide domination for its own self-seeking ends. Nor is it merely the custodian

of a set of ancient rules of life, the innovator of negative restrictions of private conduct, nor the stage director of colorful though superstitious religious practices and pageants.

Above all, the Church is not a pressure bloc wielding the "big stick" to bring about conformity. The Church is not Pope, Bishops and Priests uniting to subjugate a docile laity in the pursuit of half-understood doctrines. The Church was, is, and always shall be, Christ carrying out His mission of love and salvation, in time and in space. So the public image of the Church that we seek will be His image. When the world looks at the Church it must see—beyond its visible organization, beyond its members, beyond its policies, its doctrines and dogma—Christ Himself—and the "hunger after justice" and the charity that marked His every word and action. This is the only valid Public Image of the Church for yesterday, today or tomorrow.

#### UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY

The developments during this election year present us with a rare opportunity. Our Church and our religion, our conduct, our beliefs, our practices, our social doctrine have been the conversation piece of the year. True, not all of it has been flattering but, dismissing the bigots as incurable, there remains a vast number of American citizens who, beneath their fear and their lack of knowledge are curious about the beliefs of Catholics and who are open to a clearer picture of the Catholic Church than they now have.

I am struck by the forcefulness of Monsignor John Tracy Ellis's warning when he says "Ours is a moment in time when American Catholics owe it to themselves to become alert to the extraordinary mood of the hour, lest it should pass without their being heard. . . . Our goal is to seek the transformation of public opinion toward the Church and, in so doing, to take our share in the ultimate liquidation of the accumulated animosity of more than four centuries so that our fellow citizens may be given an enlightened concept of Catholicism and be thus enabled to dissipate the mistaken notions that may have been their inheritance from childhood."

Because we are discussing the public image of the Church from the viewpoint



of the layman's contribution in creating it, I think it might be well if we first considered the image of the Catholic layman himself.

If I am attuned to non-Catholic thought on this subject I would say that they hardly think of us at all in connection with the Church. Somehow, to them, the Church isn't the Catholic Church unless the clergy is speaking for it. In my business this is particularly evident. They tolerate us—respect us for being nice, intelligent people. They will listen to us, but don't ask them to accept what we say or do as being representative of the Catholic position. It may or may not be—an Italian paisley tie is not recognized when the issues are really drawn, for that takes a Roman collar—and in some cases this means a bishop or a Pope.

The average non-Catholic, it seems to me, is fairly well convinced that the Catholic layman is clerically dominated; has no mind of his own; and has no recognized position in the Church save that of being the passive recipient of the directives of the clergy.

Why is this so? Is it a distortion of the true image of the Church—or is it a true reflection? Of course, it is a distortion—but one for which we have only ourselves to blame. History plays a part—but our reaction to history a greater part. For example, there was the Protestant Reformation—and the reaction to the Reformation which was accomplished by a loss of status for the laymen. Then there was the era of the immigrant Church in America—the ignorant laity and the educated clergy—the only leader and spokesman the Church had was the priest. This made an indelible impression on the Protestant American mind—one that comes back to haunt us in election years like this. Even though we have climbed the numerical, cultural and economic ladder; even though we now number over 40 million and if predictions hold true we'll be 86 million in thirty years, even though we conduct 10,000 elementary schools, nearly 2,400 high schools and 260 colleges and universities; even though we graduated last year nearly 34,000 students from our universities; even though we are producing intellectual and cultural leaders of the first rank, we have not assumed our proper role in the Church nor as Catholic citizens in our country's communal life. Until we do, the image of the Church will always have a major distortion and we

will be handicapped in clarifying for our fellow citizens their other misconceptions.

Let's take a few minutes then to look at the role of the layman in relation to the Church. What is his place in the mission of the Church? Is he a "second-class citizen" in its structure? Is he a sheep only in the sense that he is to be shorn at collection time each Sunday? Is he merely the passive recipient of the ministrations of the clergy? Or is he more than that—and how much more? Does he have a special function in the Church?

It seems to me that the answer to these questions is indicated in words that Pius XII addressed to us in 1946:

"The faithful, and more precisely the laity, are stationed in the front ranks of the life of the Church, and through them the Church is the living principle of human society. Consequently, they especially must have an ever clearer consciousness, not only of belonging to the Church but of being the Church." Again and again this idea of the laity "being the Church" has found expression in the statements of the Popes, bishops and theologians. We find our role in the Church and the world expained increasingly through the concept of the Mystical Body of Christ. We believe that we are members functioning with special responsibility in the Mystical Body of Christ which is the Church here on earth. We are not priests nor bishops in whom rests the teaching authority of the Church. But we are rational, intelligent, educated members of whom it is expected that we will employ our reason, our intelligence, our education to bring Christ to the total community of which we are a part. The Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation have obliged us to carry out a very special mission to the world.

#### CONSECRATION OF THE WORLD

A few years ago in the Basilica of St. Peter's in Rome before some 30,000 delegates from 86 countries of the world—meeting in the Second World Congress of the Lay Apostolate—I heard the Holy Father outline the broad strategy in two words of striking power. . . . *Consecratio Mundi*—"The Consecration of the World"—"The Consecration of the World to Christ." This is the mission of today's layman; it is the mission of Christ . . . it is the mission of the Church, carrying out in the world, in time



## *Catholic laymen, by showing initiative and responsibility, can change our public image.*

and in space, the redemptive work of the Son of God. On this is based the layman's role in the public image of the Church.

How strange this sounds to us today, for even our ears have become "secularized," and the vocabulary of religion spoken by laymen seems out of place. And our minds have lost, so to speak, their "sense of flavor" by which they willingly accept with genuine appreciation concepts like the "consecration of the world." Yet it is in this idea that our own salvation and the saving of the world lies. In it lies the reason for our existence.

The mission of the layman flows directly from the mission of Christ's Church to the secular world. It is this secular world that must be "consecrated." We laymen are to make the world holy. But we cannot make the world holy by washing our hands in innocence of the world. We can make the world holy only by penetrating the world. We can make the world holy only by entering into the world, sharing its legitimate hopes, bearing its heavy burdens, assisting it to the purpose which God had designed for it, that it be even though not a lasting city, nevertheless a fitting home for man whom God created in His own Image and for whom He laid out an eternal destiny.

As Catholic citizens and citizens who are Catholics we must "dirty our hands," "fray our nerves," "exhaust our patience," weary ourselves in mind and body in being witnesses to the Christian message, in helping solve the ever changing problems of our times. Sometimes our approach will be as Catholics, sometimes as organized bodies of Catholic laymen working directly under the mandate of our bishops as official collaborators in their apostolate—such is the role of the National Council of Catholic Men. Sometimes, more often by far, we will be acting as individual citizens who are Catholics. The final engagement of the Catholic layman with the world he seeks to reconstruct and penetrate cannot occur within a Holy Name Society or a Knights of Columbus Council, or even in the National Council of Catholic Men. It will occur in the world—on the streets, in the offices and shops—in our homes—over the backyard fence—in our daily contact with

men. . . . I do not mean to deprecate our many wonderful organizations of Catholic men and women. They have an important function in the mission of the lay apostolate. In them the individual can find the stimulus, courage, learning, and awareness which will enable him to immerse himself in the task to which the laity of these times and future times—is summoned.

In a recent issue of *America* there is an extremely interesting article called "Seven Laymen Discuss Morality." In it they each comment on the question of whether or not our country is on a descending moral curve and whether or not "Christian" has become an ambiguous term when used to describe the United States as a "Christian Nation."

### COMMUNITY-LEAVEN

I recommend it for your reading. However, I would quote for your immediate consideration the closing statement of one of the distinguished contributors, John O'Connor, Editor of the *San Francisco Monitor*: "All Christian religions have suffered in their contest with the religion of secularism. American Catholicism, on the other hand, has been snugly molting in its cocoon. The idea of a mission-to-the-community has not caught hold widely. The Catholic as a 'self-sanctifier' rather than as a 'community-leaven' is still predominant. Catholic leadership still manifests a marvelous ability to appear only self-interested, not community interested."

The secular world—all of it—is the mission territory of the lay Christian. It will be penetrated, reconstructed, restored, choose what word you will, in the light of Christ's teachings—if we do it.

Our homes, our schools, our labor movements, our professions, our businesses, our local state, and national governments, our community, in the city, in the nation, and in the world, the arts, the written word, and spoken word, radio, television, motion pictures, advertising, books, newspapers, magazines, housing, urban re-development and rural life, wages, unemployment, automation, race relations, foreign relations, migration and immigration, legislation,

politics—yes, even war and peace, are among the endless litany of the “things of the world” that are to be “consecrated to Christ.” This is a big job, so big that it seems ridiculous to even attempt it, and yet this is really the mission of Christ.

What a difference it would make in the image of the Church for others if we laymen lived the kind of life that is required of us as Catholics. We would prove to the world that the Catholic layman has freedom, responsibility and “competency” in the pure meaning of that word, within the Church . . . and that we have a sense of our obligation as citizens and as Catholics to our country and to the world.

The image of the Church is created in a thousand ways. We have examined only a few, and those in the light of our role as laymen in the Church. They have been, for the most part, in the area of the Church's social doctrine for these are the issues that press vividly on our mind.

Many of us may never be called upon to clarify these burning issues either from a public or a private platform. But, all of us,

without exception, will be called upon to testify by our lives, to the truth of the faith that is within us. In the last analysis, it is by living and acting out the fullness of our religion that the many-faceted image of the Church will be truly represented to our fellow Americans.

The Bishops of the United States devoted their 1960 Annual Statement to the “Need for Personal Responsibility.” . . . “If the fruit of America's promise is not to wither before it has reached full maturity.”

We laymen need to assume this same kind of personal responsibility toward our Church, realizing, as Bishop John Wright so recently said: “When men and women of their own background, class and conditions speak up with the mind and heart of the Church, Christ has a chance to be heard more readily and effectively. What is special about our times is this: Nowadays, God's message for the world and the contribution of the Church to society will be taken best, when at all, from convinced laymen rather than from the official teachers of the Church.” ■ ■ ■

## READING I'VE LIKED

A necessity, both for the priest and for your inquirer's reference shelf is *New Testament Reading Guide*. This is a set of 14 paperbacks (Liturgical Press. \$4.20 per set; 30¢ a copy.) Fourteen members of the Catholic Biblical Association of America give excellent commentaries on the books of the New Testament, running under the Confraternity translation. Attractively printed, highly informative, inexpensive. A veritable encyclopedia of the latest scholarship on the New Testament.

*Catholics in Conversation*; Donald McDonald; Lippincott; \$3.95. These unheard interviews with 17 leading clerical and lay Catholics, taken on tape, provides a stimulating and revealing book on the strength and deficiencies of contemporary Catholicism in the United States. Don't miss it.

When St. Francis de Sales entered the Chablais he found only a dozen Catholics. After his missionary labors, he left behind only a dozen Protestants. This missionary triumph, along with the rest of the story of one of the most attractive of the saints, was never better told. *Francois De Sales*; Michael de la Bedoyere; Harper; \$4.00. This, the very best biography of the saint in English, should be read by every convert-maker and by his inquirers as well.

## GUIDE

- Official publication of the *Paulist Institute for Religious Research*.
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## GUIDE

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# Guide Lights

## AT FIGURES AND FOUL FACT . . .

It is rather comforting for some to dip into the general summary of the Catholic Directory and read that there were over 7,000 more converts in 1960 than in 1950. The man who likes his figures big, round, and unanalyzed will contemplate with approval that whereas 1950 produced 119,173 converts, 1960 turned in a bumper crop of 46,212. Unfortunately, there is bound to be some idle fellow with a flair for long division and a penchant for percentages who uncovers disturbing comparisons by introducing other items from the same summary, like total Catholic population and number of priests in 1950 and 1960 respectively.

This unwelcome intrusion of new material reveals the somber statistics of decline. It presents us with a picture of one convert for every 280 Catholics in 1960 as compared with one for every 233 in 1950. It further manifests 2.71 converts per priest in 1960 compared with 2.77 in 1950. Gentlemen of the kerygma, we are marching backwards.

## WORKSHOP IN THE WEST . . .

This melancholy information ought not to lead to lethargy. It ought to be an incentive for increased activity. Such activity was witnessed by *Guidelights* on November 30th in the Archdiocese of St. Paul. On that day a workshop on convert techniques was held at the seminary for priests and deacons. Approximately 100 attended.

Unfortunately, Archbishop Brady, who was scheduled to give the opening talk, could not attend. Msgr. McCarthy, the rector of the seminary, doubled in brass, with both words of welcome and welcome words. From there on the program proceeded as planned.

Father John Keating, C.S.P., spoke on "Methods of Presenting the Subject Matter of Convert Instructions." Afterwards Father James Killgallon of the archdiocese of Chicago talked on the Kerygmatic Method. Then those present broke up into a number of discussion groups led by Msgr. Raymond Rutkowski, Fathers Alfred Langley, Frederick Mertz, Paul Holmquist, Barnabas Laubach, O.S.B., and Robert Blumeyer, O.S.B. The morning's work was capped with lunch at which Bishop Leonard Cowley delivered a wise and witty talk on "Understanding Our Converts."

In the afternoon there was a report on the CCD co-instructor program. Father Lucker gave an encouraging picture of progress in this area of lay activity. Father Wilhelm, C.S.P., who organized the workshop, commented on current convert material. And Father Blumeyer, O.S.B., and Father Rosen, O.S.B., spoke on the "Non-Catholic Mentality in our Area." This was more than an academic presentation, since both priests are converts.

To return to figures for a moment, it is interesting to note that the archdiocese of St. Paul runs ahead of the national averages with 3.41 converts per priest, and one convert for every 230 Catholics. Obviously the clergy have not just discovered instruction work, but they are eager to make it even more effective by an exchange of ideas.

## BROTHERHOOD IN BOSTON . . .

There is another exchange of ideas which is very important in our pluralistic society. It is an exchange between ourselves and our clerical counterparts among the Separated Brethren. This is a matter not of conversion, but of conversation. It is a dialogue leading to mutual understanding and respect, and to a healthier religious climate in America. In the absence of such a climate, ecumenism is an idle word.

A mode of this dialogue was presented in Boston on December 6th by the Paulist Fathers at the Catholic Information Center. Father Robert Quinn, C.S.P., was in charge of the arrangements. We personally witnessed the response to the letters he sent out to priests and ministers. There were approximately 110 priests and 75 ministers on the scene. Quite a few priests were from St. John's Seminary, Boston College and Weston College. And a number of ministers came from Harvard Divinity School, Boston University School of Theology, and Andover Newton Theological School.

This adventure in understanding started at 2:30 in the afternoon. Monsignor Francis J. Lally, editor of the Boston *Pilot* introduced the two speakers of the occasion and lent a delightful flavor with a few lively sallies in his accustomed and unimpeachable style. The speakers were Dr. David N. Freedman of the Pittsburgh School of Theology and Father Roderick McKenzie, S.J., of St. Peter's Seminary, Toronto.



The topic discussed was "The Position of the Old Testament in the Christian Church." Each man spoke for approximately twenty-five minutes. Their talks were followed by a coffee break and priests and ministers strove to shake off four centuries of stiffness over the steaming brew and platters of food. This small talk around the coffee pot was perhaps more important than the large talk from the podium.

Everyone reassembled in the auditorium for a forty-five minute question and answer period. It was handled very smoothly and both priests and ministers gave every evidence that they enjoyed the experience.

#### CONVERSATION IN COLLEGEVILLE . . .

A more intensive form of dialogue took place in Collegeville, Minn., December 1st to 3rd. It was organized by the American Benedictine Academy and held under the auspices of Bishop Peter W. Bartholome of St. Cloud, Minn. Ten Catholic and Protestant religious leaders met at St. John's Abbey for a theological colloquy on issues which separate and unite Catholics and Protestants.

During the three-day meeting four papers were delivered. On the first day there were studies on "The Issues That Divide Us." The opening paper was read by Dr. Jaroslav Pelikan. The second was given by Father Raymond Bosler. The second half of the meeting was devoted to the subject, "The Factors That Unite Us." The two papers prepared on this aspect were presented by Pastor Berthold Von Schenk and Father Godfrey Diekmann, O.S.B.

The Protestant participants in the meeting were Dr. Pelikan, Professor of Historical Theology, Federated College of Divinity, University of Chicago; Pastor Von Schenk of the Lutheran Church of Our Savior, New York City; Dr. Bernhard Christensen, President of Augsburg College, Minneapolis, Minn.; Dr. Luther A. Weigel of Yale University, Chairman of the Standard Bible Committee, New Haven; and Dr. Charles Wesley Lowry, President of the Foundation for Religious Action in the Social and Civil Order, Washington, D. C.

The Catholics present were Father Bosler, Father Gustave Weigel, S.J., Professor of Theology, Woodstock; Father Diekmann; Msgr. Henry G. J. Beck, Professor of Church History, Immaculate Conception Seminary, Darlington, N. J.; Father Barnabas M. Ahern, C.P., Professor of Scripture, Passionist Fathers Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

With two such rosters the illuminations of the meeting could be exceeded only by the amiability.

#### TALKS IN TOLEDO . . .

Not all the recent dialogue has been planned by Catholics. The St. Paul Lutheran congregation recently sponsored the second annual meeting of Toledo's Ecumenical Institute. One hundred and forty clergymen came together. Thirty-five of them were Catholic priests. Dr. George Lindbeck, a Lutheran who teaches philosophy at Yale University, was the principal speaker.

Dr. Lindbeck stated that the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas are a bridge between Catholicism and Protestantism. He said that the Protestant judgment on the truth of St. Thomas' teachings must be "strikingly favorable."

"If one asks," he continued, "whether there is historically any other philosophical theological system which is more Christian which is more compatible with the Biblical witness, the answer is likely to be 'no,' at least for most Protestants who are rooted in the Reformation." He asserted that the objections of modern Protestant theologians to Thomism apply more to the teaching of St. Thomas' followers than to the teachings of St. Thomas himself.

#### MEAT FOR MINISTERS . . .

In the same spirit of dialogue, *Our Sunday Visitor*, national weekly published at Huntington, Indiana, has launched a special edition for Protestant ministers. The weekly publication, "Operation Understanding" includes the regular National Edition of OSV plus an eight-page supplement aimed at increasing understanding between Catholics and Protestants.

The national project stems from a similar undertaking sponsored by *The Lone Star Catholic*, OSV, Austin, Texas diocesan weekly. There the "Operation Understanding" program, directed by editor Dale Francis, resulted in 12,000 ministers receiving copies of *The Lone Star Catholic*. The subscriptions were paid for by Catholic readers.

In discussing the success of the local project, Mr. Francis pointed to the number of clergymen who have spoken out against bigotry. "It is heartwarming," he said, "to recognize their names as friends who learn to understand the Catholic Church better through 'Operation Understanding.'"

In the most recent issue as we go to press there is a fine review of Father Tavares' "*Holy Writ or Holy Church*." It is a book which a Protestant Theologian has called "one of the best interpretations of contemporary Protestantism that has been made by a Roman Catholic."

JOHN J. KEATING, C.S.P.



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